



DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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FROM PLANTING FOR WILDLIFE TO ANSWERING QUESTIONS SERVICE VOLUNTEERS REAP LASTING REWARDS

The work is often down-and-dirty, knee-deep-in-a-bog labor. It might involve planting native vegetation for endangered waterbirds or building a barrier-free fishing pier for disabled anglers.

At other times, the work might be intellectually challenging such as explaining bird migration to a six-year-old or biodiversity to a high school science class.

But whatever the task, being a volunteer for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service is rewarding -- so rewarding, in fact, that last year 18,000 people donated nearly a million hours of their time to ensure Americans both today and in the future can enjoy our irreplaceable fish and wildlife resources.

"You might ask yourself why anyone would volunteer to slog out in the middle of a swamp to plant vegetation or answer a thousand questions at a visitor center," said Robert Shallenberger, chief of the Service's Division of National Wildlife Refuges.

"But the truth is our volunteers aren't working for nothing. There is a joy and inner satisfaction that comes from accomplishing something long-lasting, whether in contributing to wildlife conservation itself or simply to other people's enjoyment and appreciation of nature."

The number of volunteers at National Wildlife Refuges, National Fish Hatcheries, and other Service facilities has more

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than quadrupled in the past decade, according to the recently released "Volunteer Program Report for Fiscal Year 1992." The report estimates their contributions were worth \$8.2 million during 1992.

According to the report, 49 percent of the volunteer hours was spent on resource support such as banding and surveying wildlife, stocking fish, and research; 24 percent was devoted to constructing or maintaining trails, wildlife habitat, grounds, and facilities; 21 percent on public use such as environmental education, operating visitor centers, and conducting tours; and 6 percent on office or administrative support.

Volunteers range in age from 5 years to senior citizens and include college students supplementing their curriculum, Boy Scouts working to become Eagle Scouts, scientists, and even international visitors.

For example, two French students traveled at their own expense to spend two weeks working at the Great Lakes National Fisheries Research Center in Michigan; an environmental engineer from Germany donated 300 hours to the Litchfield Wetland Management District in Minnesota; and another volunteer from Germany spent three months assisting the Buenos Aires National Wildlife Refuge in Arizona in surveys of refuge grasslands and a proposed endangered cactus species.

In a spirit of partnership, corporations and their employees are also getting involved. Since 1987, for example, Kerr-McGee Corporation has organized massive beach cleanups at the Breton National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana, near the corporation's oil and gas production facilities. Last year alone, the effort removed 1,500 tons of litter and debris from the refuge.

One hundred volunteers at the Leavenworth National Fish Hatchery in Washington assisted in the handling and spawning of more than 11,000 Chinook salmon, designed and constructed a one-mile-long interpretive trail with birdwatching blinds, built a barrier-free viewing deck for the salmon spawning area, designed and built an outdoor aquarium, and topped it all off with a 4-day salmon festival for 8,000 visitors.

For more information on volunteering for the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, write Allyson Rowell, Division of Refuges, Room 655, Arlington Square, 4401 North Fairfax Drive, Arlington, Va. 22203.

Copies of the 17-page report may be obtained by writing to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (RF-670 Arl Sq), 1849 C Street, NW, Washington, DC 20240.